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Chairman: Mr. Carranza-Cifuentes (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Guatemala)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 108: Elimination of racism and racial discrimination (*continued*) (A/53/18, A/53/255, A/53/256, A/53/269, A/53/305 and A/53/489)

Agenda item 109: Right of peoples to self-determination (*continued*) (A/53/131-S/1998/435, A/53/205-S/1998/711, A/53/280 and A/53/338)

1. **Ms. Nicodemos** (Brazil) said that her country's Constitution characterized racial discrimination as a crime, prohibited unequal treatment and imposed an obligation on the State to promote equal opportunity through positive actions. It also ensured the protection of cultural heritage, including all forms of expression and ways of life of the different ethnic groups that made up Brazilian society. Although racism and racial discrimination were widely repudiated by Brazilian society, discrimination on racial grounds could still occur. Those issues were being addressed by a ministerial committee consisting of representatives of the Government and of organizations of civil society, which surveyed the implementation of public policies in areas such as employment, education, health and information.

2. Afro-Brazilians made up about 44.2 per cent of Brazil's population. Their advancement was a central aspect of governmental action, which acknowledged that group's important contribution to the national identity and sought to ensure equal access to the benefits of citizenship. The Constitution recognized the land rights of the rural communities descended from the "quilombos", or black communities of past centuries which had resisted slavery. The Government had identified 511 "quilombo" areas, of which 55 had already been demarcated. Four of those communities had received formal title to their land.

3. Brazil commended the initiatives taken by the United Nations to eliminate racism and racial discrimination. However, the resurgence of doctrines of racial superiority and purity and the spread of xenophobic tendencies throughout the world were a major cause of concern. All Governments should take immediate and vigorous action to combat discrimination against migrant workers, asylum seekers and ethnic minorities. Racial problems could only be solved through dialogue and tolerance. The international community should fully support the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, as well as the convening of a world conference not later than the year 2001. Brazil, which had co-sponsored the resolution on the designation of a Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, hoped that all Member States would extend to the Special Rapporteur the cooperation he needed to fulfil his mandate.

4. One of the principles enshrined in Brazil's Constitution was the right of peoples to self-determination. Brazil had consistently supported the struggles of peoples under colonial or other forms of foreign domination. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action recognized the right of peoples to take any legitimate action, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, to realize their inalienable right of self-determination, although that right did not authorize any action which would impair the territorial integrity or political unity of States whose Government represented the whole people belonging to the territory without distinction of any kind. Because democracy was a determining factor in the promotion of the right of peoples to self-determination, it was necessary to seek ways and means of supporting democratic and representative political systems for the benefit of all.

5. **Mr. Ka** (Senegal) commended the report submitted by the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance (A/53/269). Many factors contributed to racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia, and the United Nations and the international community should address the many underlying causes of such attitudes and conduct, which were increasingly common in certain countries. Some of those causes were economic in nature; for example, unemployment and lack of opportunity prompted some citizens to assume, erroneously, that foreigners were to blame for their misfortune simply because the latter occupied jobs that otherwise would have been available to the former. In addition, racism, racial discrimination and intolerance often reflected issues related to education and culture or to political and electoral considerations, as in the case of the dangerous increase, in some countries, in groups that openly embraced fascism, Nazism or a narrow and exclusionist form of nationalism.

6. The right to be different, respect for the cultural identity of others, the spirit of tolerance and the principles of equality, fraternity and liberty should be reaffirmed everywhere. No country or human society should permit any form of religious or cultural intolerance. It was disturbing to note phenomena such as the abuse of the Internet to spread racist and xenophobic propaganda. It was necessary to adopt a national and international code of conduct and general ethical guidelines on the use of the Internet and other modern communications media. He commended the work carried out in that area by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

(UNESCO), the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Commission on Human Rights and the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. The Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination offered an opportunity to pursue and intensify the world information, sensitization and education campaign on all the relevant international legal instruments. The goal of universal ratification of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination should be achieved before the end of the Third Decade.

7. Senegal's Constitution prohibited all forms of racism, xenophobia and discrimination based on sex, race, religion, ethnic group or skin colour. The formation of political parties based on racial, ethnic or religious considerations was prohibited by law. Senegal had always advocated the principle of a "universal civilization" created through the contributions of nations and peoples with different traditions. The first World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, to be held not later than the year 2001, would be a milestone in the building of such a civilization.

8. Based on the principle that the right of peoples to self-determination was an inalienable right, and on the need to settle disputes by peaceful means, Senegal supported the just struggle of the Palestinian people for self-determination and for the establishment of their own State on their own land. It was necessary to combat all the forms of national and State separatism and disintegration that were currently observed in most parts of the world. Young nations, particularly those in Africa, must be consolidated and strengthened, and the principle of the inviolability of the borders inherited from colonialism must be respected. Since attaining independence in 1960, Senegal had implemented a decentralization policy that had culminated in the transformation, in 1996, of the country's 10 administrative regions into decentralized local communities that enjoyed legal personality and financial autonomy, and each of which had its own assembly elected by universal suffrage. That reform had brought the Administration closer to the people and had increased the latter's participation in the management of public affairs. The forthcoming establishment, following the senatorial elections, of a second house of Parliament would help to broaden and strengthen the principles of good governance, democracy and participation on which the nation was based.

9. His country, which, in 1972, had ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, had become one of the 25 States parties that had declared, in accordance with article 14, paragraph 1, of that Convention, that they recognized the competence of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination to receive and consider communications from individuals or groups of individuals within their jurisdiction claiming to be victims of a violation of any of the rights set forth in the Convention.

10. **Mr. Van Dunem "Mbinda"** (Angola), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that he attached great importance to the issue of racism and racial discrimination, not only because its consequences directly affected southern Africa, but also because it involved inhuman practices that hindered the harmonious development of all peoples. At the end of the current millennium, many of the fundamental objectives of the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination had not yet been achieved. SADC fully endorsed those objectives and the Programme of Action for the Third Decade, as well as the decision by the Economic and Social Council to request the General Assembly to consider the possibility of providing the resources required for the implementation of the Programme of Action. Some progress had been made and, despite its financial difficulties, the United Nations had undertaken a number of activities. SADC echoed the Secretary-General's appeal to all Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and individuals in a position to do so to contribute generously to the Trust Fund for the Programme of Action for the Third Decade. Otherwise, only a few of the many activities planned could be carried out.

11. To date, 150 countries had acceded to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and SADC hoped that all other countries would accede to it in due course. It was encouraging to note the growing tendency of some States to adopt legislation protecting minorities against racism and racial discrimination. Nevertheless, much remained to be done. SADC was concerned about the proliferation of new forms of racism and racial discrimination, such as segregation based on ethnic factors and xenophobia, which mainly targeted immigrants. The resurgence of neo-fascist and neo-Nazi groups should not be seen as an isolated phenomenon. Particularly alarming was the fact that some political parties included xenophobia and discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities in their electoral platforms. SADC condemned the new wave of discrimination that used alleged racial or ethnic superiority or purity as a pretext.

12. SADC welcomed the report of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. Unless Governments took effective measures

to promote multiculturalism, many immigrants and migrant workers would continue to be discriminated against and would become a heavy burden to societies instead of contributing to their economic and social development. SADC supported the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur and the continuation of his mandate, as well as the allocation of adequate resources to enable him to carry out his mission.

13. He was concerned to note that some extremist organizations, abusing the right to freedom of expression, used the Internet to spread racist propaganda and racial hatred. SADC supported the idea of conducting studies and research on legal or voluntary means of prohibiting the dissemination of racism and racial discrimination on the Internet and stronger government action to thwart the objectives of such organizations. SADC also fully supported the convening, as a matter of priority, of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.

14. With respect to the situation of peoples still living under foreign or colonial domination or occupation, the time had come for colonial or occupying Powers to comply with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960, which guaranteed the full exercise by all peoples of their rights and freedoms, including the right to choose freely their own destiny. In that context, SADC fully supported the right of such peoples and territories to self-determination.

15. **Mr. Valencia Rodríguez** (Ecuador) said that the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination was very important and that he regretted the delay in the submission of its report (A/53/18), which had made it difficult to take due note of the activities carried out by that body in the last year.

16. Owing to a multitude of political, social and economic factors, new forms of racism and racial discrimination had broken out in many countries, resulting in gross violations of human rights. It was therefore essential that the General Assembly should reaffirm its unequivocal condemnation of the abhorrent practice of "ethnic cleansing" and of attempts to adjust political borders according to the ethnicity of populations. Nevertheless, the primary responsibility for combating those phenomena was borne by States, as established in the revised Programme of Action for the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination. It must be explicitly recognized that racist and xenophobic ideas did not emerge spontaneously in political circles, public opinion or society in general, but were instilled or maintained for political reasons.

17. In relation to the objectives established in General Assembly resolution 52/111 with regard to the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, ways and means of increasing the effectiveness of the activities and mechanisms of the United Nations had already been identified. What remained to be done was to recognize and promote the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, to insist that States, in turn, should fully meet the obligations they had undertaken under the Convention and to promote universal accession to the Convention. The effective participation of society was essential to those efforts, and the views of non-governmental organizations, especially those that promoted the protection of human rights, and primarily the elimination of racism and racial discrimination, should be welcomed as positive contributions.

18. Special mention should be made of respect for the human rights of ethnic minorities and efforts to stop the racial discrimination directed against indigenous populations in many countries. The domestic policy of States should be guided by general recommendation XXIII (51) adopted by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which called in particular upon States parties to recognize and respect indigenous distinct culture, history, language and way of life as an enrichment of the State's cultural identity and to ensure that members of indigenous peoples were free and equal in dignity and rights and free from any discrimination, in particular that based on indigenous origin or identity.

19. Education was an essential component of efforts to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, since it formed the basis for bringing up new generations free from racial prejudice or ethnic hatred. It was also important to emphasize national human rights programmes, such as the one which Ecuador had adopted as a law of the Republic, to institutionalize, through State agencies and civil society, the identification of obstacles to the full exercise of those rights and the implementation of practical proposals for legal, political, administrative, economic, social, cultural and environmental measures. Careful monitoring was needed at both the national level, to ensure compliance with domestic laws, and the international level, to ensure compliance with international obligations. Appropriate exchanges of information between those two spheres were necessary to ensure the effectiveness of such monitoring.

20. **Mr. Baali** (Algeria) said that, throughout its existence, the United Nations had made genuine progress in combating racism and racial discrimination, which were among the

most serious violations of human rights. The dismantling of apartheid, primarily as a result of the struggle of the South African people, had also been made possible by the impressive mobilization of the international community and of the United Nations in particular. Nevertheless, it had not been possible to eliminate the scourge of racism, which had re-emerged in new forms and with the support of racist and xenophobic ideologies that claimed to have scientific evidence of the theory of the biological inequality of the races. Those new forms of racism were growing throughout the world, especially in Europe. There had been an increase in the activities of neo-fascist and neo-Nazi groups and of extremist parties that championed racial prejudices and hatred of foreigners on the dual pretext of nationalism and the economic crisis, whose victims were migrant workers, refugees or minorities. Even more serious was the use of the media and the Internet to advocate the supremacy of certain races or ethnic groups and to spread xenophobic messages, in the name of freedom of expression. The international community must react decisively to that situation by adopting measures to strengthen the legislative and regulatory system, introducing educational programmes that emphasized respect for all human rights, tolerance and mutual acceptance and elaborating codes of conduct that strictly prohibited the dissemination of racist theories on the Internet.

21. The primary objective of the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, proclaimed in 1993, was to eliminate those phenomena. Paradoxically, however, few resources had been allocated for the implementation of the relevant programmes. Greater efforts by the international community were needed, in view of the deplorable financial situation of the Trust Fund. The World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, which was to be held not later than the year 2001, would give the international community an opportunity to take a coherent and structured approach to all those phenomena, particularly new forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and other contemporary forms of intolerance, and he hoped that practical measures and recommendations would be adopted in the areas of prevention, protection and education. The Commission on Human Rights, which would act as the preparatory committee for the Conference, should draw up the agenda and set the date as soon as possible. In that connection, the contribution and participation of the United Nations and of its specialized agencies and funds and programmes, as well as that of non-governmental organizations, would be very useful.

22. Algeria had ratified, without reservations, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and had recognized the competence of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination to consider communications from individuals or groups of individuals claiming to be victims of a violation of any of the rights set forth in the Convention. It trusted that the Conference would inspire earnest and responsible efforts to combat racism and its new manifestations. Undoubtedly, that struggle was the responsibility of all States and required the mobilization of the entire international community through the strengthening of dialogue and cooperation and the promotion of all national and multilateral initiatives. In the current era of globalization, it was necessary to make concerted efforts through the family, schools and the media and to work together to inculcate into the adults of the future the principles of mutual respect and tolerance, solidarity and justice, and to ensure that the new generation of the third millennium could turn the global village into the prosperous and welcoming place which all peoples aspired to create.

23. More than four decades earlier, the peoples under colonial or foreign domination had stated their resolve to recover their freedom and dignity and to take their rightful place within the community of free nations. That struggle of the peoples of Asia and Africa against the colonial Powers had also been waged by the United Nations and had found expression in the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, which had enshrined the principle of self-determination as an inalienable right. The Organization, through its Special Committee on Decolonization, had made an invaluable contribution to the triumph of freedom. Nevertheless, that task remained unfinished for as long as there were peoples deprived of the free exercise of their basic right to self-determination.

24. For more than 50 years, the Palestinian people had suffered from the occupation of their territory and had asserted their right to decide their own destiny and to establish their own independent State in the land of their ancestors. He hoped that the agreement concluded recently between the Palestinians and the Israelis would lead to a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian problem.

25. The people of Western Sahara, who also deserved respect and admiration, had been equally tenacious in asserting their right to self-determination and independence, and were convinced of the justice of their struggle and of the inevitable triumph of their cause. As a result of the agreements concluded in Houston between the Kingdom of Morocco and the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y de Rio de Oro (Frente POLISARIO), the

process of implementing the settlement plan for Western Sahara seemed to be moving in the right direction, and he hoped that it would culminate in the organization, under the auspices of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity, of a free, fair and impartial referendum for the self-determination of that people. The resolution adopted recently by consensus by the Special Political and Decolonization Committee, which reaffirmed the responsibility of the United Nations in achieving the decolonization of Western Sahara, represented a positive and commendable step. The international community, and particularly the Security Council, should ensure that the settlement plan and the relevant agreements were scrupulously respected so that the people of Western Sahara could express themselves with complete freedom and with no restrictions of any kind.

26. **Ms. Barghouti** (Observer for Palestine) said that the right to self-determination was an inalienable and basic human right that enabled peoples to choose their destiny and their political, economic and social systems. Moreover, it gave them sovereignty over their land, wealth and resources. The denial of that right contradicted the principles and norms of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. Serious action was required to combat injustice and oppression and to secure the right of all peoples to self-determination. The full realization and protection of human rights, both collective and individual, remained an issue that was closely linked to international efforts to maintain peace and security worldwide. It was therefore critical to fulfil the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights instruments.

27. Major United Nations conferences and other forums had reaffirmed the right to self-determination of all peoples, including those living under colonial or other forms of alien domination or occupation. That idea had been endorsed in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and the Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations. However, the Palestinian people continued to live under the Israeli occupation and its oppressive policies and practices. For too long, they had suffered from discrimination, oppression and injustice. Greater effort by the international community was needed to ensure that the Palestinian people could finally enjoy their right to self-determination, which continued to be denied.

28. The recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, who were a population of about seven million people with a great history, civilization and national identity, and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State were prerequisites for the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. The Palestinian people sought with dignity to enjoy their natural right to sovereignty and independence. Israel's illegal policies and practices were increasing the suffering, frustration and humiliation of the Palestinian people. The Israeli Government continued to create new facts on the ground, consisting mainly of illegal colonial settlements, and to restrict the Palestinians' freedom of movement and detain prisoners. The problems of Palestine refugees and displaced persons had not yet been solved. She hoped that the Palestinian people's right to self-determination could soon be exercised as a result of the peace process, with the establishment of an independent State with Jerusalem as its capital, and that that process would bring peace and prosperity to the entire region. At the current stage, it was imperative that the States Members of the United Nations should support the legitimate aspirations and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. She recalled President Arafat's appeal for such support, and trusted that the draft resolution to be submitted by her delegation would be adopted by consensus.

29. **Mr. Simón Padros** (Argentina) said, in relation to the elimination of racism and racial discrimination, that he shared the concerns expressed by the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance with respect to the resurgence of neo-fascism and neo-Nazism, the exacerbation of nationalism based on ethnic distinctions and the use of the Internet to disseminate racist ideologies. Argentina was aware of the important role which the United Nations had played and should continue to play in eradicating those phenomena, which reflected the combined effects of globalization, identity crises and social exclusion. The forthcoming World Conference against Racism would be a necessary corollary to the work carried out by the United Nations in the framework of the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination.

30. Argentina fully honoured the obligations it had undertaken in signing the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Countries that had not yet ratified the Convention should take a decision to do so, as a contribution to the preparations for the World Conference. Also worthy of note was the valuable work which the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination had carried out since its establishment.

31. The obligation to promote the full and equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by all its inhabitants was enshrined in the legal order in force in the Argentine Republic, and particularly in its basic instruments.

Openness to the entry of aliens and the well-established tradition of migration had been enshrined in the country's first Constitution, of 1853, and in subsequent reforms of that text. In 1988, the Congress had adopted, by a unanimous vote of all the political parties represented in the legislature, a law prohibiting discriminatory acts of any kind.

32. In 1995, the Government had established, within the Ministry of the Interior, the National Institute to Combat Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism (INADI) to take action — through education, information and friendly debate — against all forms of oppression and intolerance towards minorities. Recently, INADI had launched a programme for women based on the premise that, in order to ensure equal opportunity for women, it was necessary to eliminate bureaucratic and administrative prejudices, styles and concepts that impeded the free development of their personality. In so doing, the Government sought to implement the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, which were based on the dignity and equality inherent in all human beings and on the commitment of States to promoting and stimulating universal and effective respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all, without distinction of any kind.

33. At the root of discrimination was a cultural problem in which all members of society were involved. Discrimination was often maintained by prejudices which people transmitted on a daily basis in their social relations without questioning the validity of those messages. Governments should promote attitudes of solidarity that challenged individualistic tendencies. Those attitudes should be formed in families, schools, institutions and organizations of civil society. It was important to emphasize the decisive role played by education and information campaigns that promoted understanding and tolerance among all people, without distinction of any kind. Discrimination was an obstacle to the exercise of human rights and a factor that increased the level of violence in society. To build a more just society with greater solidarity, it was essential to learn to recognize and eliminate discrimination.

34. **Ms. Flórez** (Cuba) said that various parts of the world, especially some countries of the North with a high level of socio-economic development, had witnessed the resurgence of new forms of racism that targeted not only racial and ethnic minorities, but also immigrants. In some cases, those manifestations had been institutionalized through discriminatory laws. Political parties that advocated racial exclusion had gained ground in a number of industrialized countries and, in some of them, had become real contenders for political power. Those trends were being observed in an economic and social climate characterized by fear engendered by the effects of globalization, identity crises and social exclusion. In addition, planet-wide networks such as the Internet were being used for purposes of incitation to racial hatred. It was imperative to draw up a code of conduct for Internet users and service providers and to use modern technology as an educational tool to combat racist propaganda and promote mutual understanding. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights could set up a site on its Internet Web page to help combat racism and to promote the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. As had been recognized by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in its general recommendation XV (42) of 17 March 1993, the prohibition of the dissemination of ideas based upon racial superiority or hatred was compatible with the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and thus with article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 5 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

35. The Convention currently had 150 States parties, and the objective of universal ratification still seemed remote. Cuba was concerned about the unjustified failure of some States parties to submit their periodic reports on time and, in particular, about the fact that one prominent and powerful member of the Organization was trying to avoid international scrutiny by not submitting reports to the Committee. Cuba, which was a developing country that faced countless difficulties and challenges, some of which were even more urgent priorities, had recently submitted its periodic report to the Committee.

36. The Cuban delegation gave top priority to the need to support the process of preparing for and convening the World Conference, and hoped that the Special Rapporteur and the Programme of Action for the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination would be provided with the additional resources needed to enable them to meet their objectives.

37. The right of every State to the full exercise of national sovereignty and that of every people to self-determination, without foreign interference or intervention, were the pillars of the post-war legal order, including the United Nations. The new historical situation had been conducive to the development of the concept of the right to self-determination, which was no longer seen primarily in terms of the need to end colonialism and promote the establishment of new and independent States, but had taken on more complex dimensions. Ethnic and national problems must not be allowed to become a destabilizing factor that undermined the territorial integrity and political independence of States,

since the challenge of preserving peace depended on respect for nations, their territorial integrity, their cultural diversity and their political pluralism. Cuba continued to demand the return of the territory that had been illegally usurped, against the will of its people, by the United States for the naval base at Guantánamo. Cuba had not renounced and would never renounce its legitimate right to exercise sovereignty over the entire national territory, including its airspace and territorial sea.

38. The research and report of the Special Rapporteur on the use of mercenaries were extremely important because mercenary activity was not a thing of the past; on the contrary, it had diversified and its operating methods had been modernized, as Cuba's own experience had demonstrated. In his most recent reports, the Special Rapporteur had reported on complaints from the Government of Cuba making reference to mercenary attacks against that country. The Cuban authorities had provided new information on mercenary activities promoted from abroad and had invited the Special Rapporteur to make a field visit to Cuba. Cuba called upon all Member States to prohibit the use of their territory for the recruitment, assembly, financing, training, transit and use of mercenaries. Cuba would introduce a draft resolution on the subject, and hoped that the latter would be widely supported.

39. **Mr. Arda** (Turkey) said that more than three million Turkish citizens lived abroad and had contributed, with their labour, to the prosperity of other countries. However, in time of difficulty, they were treated as scapegoats and subjected to racist violence. Owing to the increase in xenophobic attacks on Turkish citizens and other foreigners, Turkey had proposed the inclusion, on the General Assembly's agenda, of the issue of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. It therefore welcomed both the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on the issue and the European Union's declaration of 1997 as the European Year against Racism and the European Commission's adoption of a plan of action. It supported the Special Rapporteur's recommendation that a body should be established to study hate groups.

40. The World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance should represent a milestone and should result in a clear determination of the most effective means of eradicating contemporary forms of those phenomena. To that end, it was necessary to remedy the shortcomings of existing instruments and to make a clear distinction between racial discrimination as a systematic policy and gratuitous forms of racism or xenophobia in which the victim's very existence was enough to provoke violence. Only a satisfactory outcome and effective follow-up of the World Conference would obviate the need for the international community to declare a fourth decade to combat racism. The Programme of Action for the Third Decade could be a source of important ideas for the World Conference. However, its level of funding was insufficient for its implementation. Turkey therefore urged donors to contribute to the relevant Trust Fund. The allocation of funds from the regular budget of the United Nations for the implementation of the Programme of Action should also be considered for the biennium 2000–2001.

41. Turkey welcomed the establishment, by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, of a Racism Project Team to promote liaison with other United Nations activities. Considering the seriousness of the phenomena in question, the team should be made a permanent organ of that Office and should be provided with sufficient human and material resources.

42. On the issue of mercenaries, Turkey agreed with the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights that connections between mercenaries and terrorist groups must be taken into account, since mercenaries sometimes acted as trainers and technical planners, and even as members of such groups.

43. The Republic of Turkey, which had been established following a struggle against foreign occupation and alien domination, had historically attached great importance to the right to self-determination of peoples under colonial or other forms of alien domination or foreign occupation. In accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Conference on Human Rights and the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States, Turkey believed that the right to self-determination should not be construed as authorizing or encouraging any action which would dismember or impair, totally or in part, the territorial integrity or political unity of sovereign and independent States possessed of democratically elected Governments and legislatures representing the whole population. Turkey therefore strongly opposed the use of mercenaries, which threatened the exercise of the right to self-determination, and supported the Special Rapporteur's recommendations on the need to remedy national and international legal shortcomings to ensure that problems related to mercenary activities could be addressed effectively.

The meeting rose at 4.15 p.m.